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FRAGMENTS OF ESSAYS:

—AND—

OTHER VERSES.

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PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,
BY W. H. EVANS,
PRINCETON, IND.

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FRAGMENTS OF ESSAYS:

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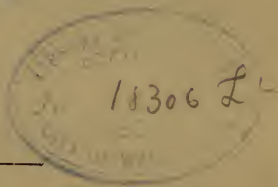
OTHER VERSES.

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By Clarence A. Buskirk

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PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,
BY W. H. EVANS,
PRINCETON, IND.

1882

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Hon. HORACE P. BIDDLE,

LOGANSPOUT, INDIANA,

Dear Sir:

Permit me to dedicate to you this
little volume, with sentiments of great respect and
esteem.

Yours sincerely,

CLARENCE A. BUSKIRK.

Princeton, Ind., January 3d, 1881.

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NOTES TO FRAGMENTS OF ESSAYS.

(NOTE A.)

*The pen becomes the hand of Beatrice,
That guides us on through lands of joy and peace.*

“Beatrice upward gazed, and I on her.
Meseemed as if a cloud had covered us,
Translucent, solid, firm, and polished bright
Like adamant, which the sun’s beams had smit.”
—*Carey’s Dante’s Paradise.*

(NOTE B.)

*An old man, with his boy, once started down,
His ass before him, to the market-town.*

The author makes no pretensions of course, to originality in the matter of the outlines of this fable. And this remark is applicable to the other fables which he has regrafted into these pages.

(NOTE C.)

*All persons by attorney may appear
In court, save fools, whose bodies must be there.*

This is given on the authority of “*Comic Blackstone.*”

(NOTE D.)

*The poor fly
Inclosed in amber. may amuse the eye.*

“It (amber) sometimes encloses insects of species which no longer exist.”—*Chambers’ Encyclopedia.*

“Pretty ! in amber to observe the forms
Of hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs, or worms !
The things, we know are neither rich nor rare,
But wonder how the devil they got there.”
—*Pope.*

“He (Canning) is a fly in amber ; nobody cares about the fly ; the only question is, How the devil did it get there ?”—*Rev. Sydney Smith.*

(NOTE E.)

*Sam Johnson hints that marriage, it is plain,
Is much like flies upon a window-pane ;
Those outside to get in buzz much about,
Those inside buzz still harder to get out.*

“Marriage is like flies on a window-glass, those on the outside wanting to get in, and those on the inside wanting to get out.”—*Dr. Sam’l Johnson.*

(NOTE F.)

*History tells that in a former age,
A Duchess had a monkey for a page.*

“Barbe, Duchess of Cleveland and Countess of Southampton, had a monkey for her page. In the household of Frances Sutton, Baroness Dudley, eighth peeress on the baron’s bench, tea was handed by a baboon dressed in gold brocade, that Lady Dudley called her negro. Catherine Sidley, Countess of Dorchester, went to a sitting of Parliament in a carriage bearing her coat of arms, behind which stood up, their muzzles in the air, three monkeys, in full livery. A Duchess of Medina—Coeli, whose levee was attended by a Cardinal, had her stockings put on by an ourang-outang.”—*The Man Who Laughs.*

FRAGMENTS OF ESSAYS.

I.

At early morn through valleys green and sweet,
The pilgrim loiters with delighted feet.
The sun, just rising from behind the hills,
With rosy light one half the landscape fills ;
The flowers and grass are diamonded with dew ;
The breezes blow as bland as ever blew ;
The joyous birds with sweet songs come and go ;
The streamlets murmur with their voices low ;
The blossoming trees with fragrance freight the air,
While unseen garments seem to rustle there ;
And every scene and blissful sound combine
To fill the pilgrim's breast with joys divine.

And when at last his steps are forced to scale
The rugged rocks which skirt the beauteous vale,
He backward looks with many a wistful sigh
At scenes which nevermore can charm his eye :
And as he bids the spot a fond adieu,
His mind recalls with retrospective view,
The dear associations of the past,
Which were too full of happiness to last !

Perhaps his memory wanders to the scene
First where his life began. Two oaks, (whose green
And mighty trunks stand close beside a lake,
Whose crystal waves on banks of verdure break,)
Half hide from view the antiquated cot,
Which seems the hermit of the lonely spot. .
Its windows are thrown open to the breeze
Which rustles cool and fragrant from the trees ;

Its walls are fondled by thick, clambering vines,
Where many a flower its lovely cheek reclines;
And from the string-latched door a path descends
To where the lake its graceful circle bends.
Across the lakelet, twice an arrow's flight,
A rocky hill abruptly greets the sight,
Which stretches upward into quiet woods,
Cleft with deep dells and lovely solitudes;
While to the right, two pleasant miles between,
The neighboring village animates the scene.

Here the keen blood of boyhood swiftly sped
Through joyous veins; here with electric tread
The lithe form bounded, nimble as the fawn
That quenched its thirst beside the lake at dawn;
Here the round, silver voice rang sweetly out
In laughter and loud song and happy shout,
While health and vigor lent their ecstasy,
Flushed the brown cheek and sparkled in the eye.

Alas! we mortals were not born for ease,
To spend our lives in golden joys like these!
Alas! our fate ordains we toilers must
Confront life's highway with its soiling dust;
To sweat, to toil, to tire, to groan, to sob,
The helpless atoms of a drifting mob!

Tell me, Alcmene's son of mighty arm;
Tell me, thou bard whose voice the world doth charm,
Why all these passions, agonies and toils,
To win a victory which death despoils?

The poet's voice comes back, (like the sad tone
Of some old harp which perished hands have known,)
And murmurs that the gem of happiness
Sparkles not on the forehead of success;
But rather that it brightens with its fires
The darkness where man labors and aspires!

My heart aches, and I tire of the poor strife
Through which thus far I've dragged the chain of life,
Toiling through weary years of carking cares,
Until I tread the threshold of gray hairs.

My tempest-driven heart I'll moor awhile
In some calm haven where the muses smile,—
Such as it loved in the far days of youth,
While life was still a dream of joy and truth.

Poesy, like a fair enchantress, waves
Her wand above the soul, and from its graves
New forms of beauty robed in splendor start,
With speech before unheard to move the heart.

The mind that journeys into realms ideal,
Often forgets the sorrows of the real:
The pen becomes the hand of Beatrice,
That guides us on through lands of joy and peace.
(Note a.)

The pungled years, whose rude and pitiless
Hands have despoiled the virgin loveliness
Of half the flowers on life's capricious wreath,
At least have bared the hateful thorns beneath.

And thus my pen, that whilom only knew
To laud the beautiful and love the true,
Now likewise shall assail the citadels
Where folly reigns, and vice, the siren, dwells.

Vices, like men, their novelties pursue,
Forever shifting into fashions new:
And long as folly lives and vices flaunt,
Bards shall write on and topics never want.

Eternal muse! adored by bard and sage!
With streams of rhythmic beauty flood my page!
Wit! drop upon my pen thy sparks of fire,
That vice and folly may not scorn its ire!

(Wit is a shining bubble, that when caught
By clumsy hands at once dissolves to nought;

A drifting butterfly, whose colors bright
Rub off and fade when captured in its flight.
It comes,—whene'er it deigns to come at all,—
Like the electric sparks which clouds let fall,
A coy, untamable and fickle sprite,
A moment's bubble and a deathless light.

See the misguided wretch whose patient head,
He fain would make an obstetricious bed,
Or toilsome workshop of consummate gear,
From which at stated times wit shall appear:
In stony attitude he gravely sits
With eyes askew, and ponderously knits
His barren brow, while soon his goose-quill gray
Expels a sure abortion for his pay.)

My humble verses no such magic own
As Memnon's statue, that gave forth its tone
Of marvelous music under the dawn's kiss.
On the cloud-curtain hiding the abyss
Of matters infinite, I seek to paint
No visions for the fancy of the saint.
Nor do I seek to stretch a fleecy veil
Of silken rhymes effeminate and frail,
For *popularis aura*, that would fly
In shreds if bellied with an honest sigh.

My aspiration is to hold a torch,
As one of many, on the temple-porch
Where truth presides in star-eyed majesty ;
To throw some beams of light upon the sea
Of storms and wrecks where floats humanity.

But greater things than lanterns now engage
The sleepless soul of Progress? In an age
Like this, why should one turn to puerile
Verse-making, and, with moon-face sitting still
And jingling rhymes, join not the stirring hosts
Who plant our banners upon alien coasts,
Rib continents with parallels of steel,
The treasures of the earth and sky reveal,

Build cities like the genii of the past,
Heap marvels upon marvels 'til, at last,
'Twould seem that men were building firm and high
A prosperous Babel destined to the sky?

To different men a difference of pursuits,
Just as to different trees are different fruits.
While swine for acorns always hunt the oak,
By man this obvious law is often broke:
Oft the world sees beneath a chancellor's wig
The sandwiched noddle of a brainless prig;
Finds if some doctors swallowed their own pills,
Their fate would save their neighbors numerous ills;
Beholds a pulpit turned into a pound
By some stray ass of most ungodly sound.

Besides, each age requires its living soul,
As well as living body. To the pole
Adventurous ships may penetrate; the earth
May from its womb yield many a wondrous birth;
The lightning from the heavens may descend
And toil for man his servant and his friend;
Yet usefuller to man than all of these,
May be Confucius, Shakspeare, Socrates.

II.

I stood and saw a slow ship sailing in,
Whose lonely path across the seas had been.
I looked on every sorrow, age and sex,
Among the exiles swarming on her decks;
The old man with gray locks and tottering staff;
The bright-eyed boy with music in his laugh;
The home-sick matron with her long-drawn sigh;
The graceful girl with moonlight in her eye;
The patient peasant, whose athletic arm
Confronts the honest toil of shop and farm;
All these, abandoning their native land,
I saw approach Columbia's welcome strand,
Grief in each heart, hope kindling every eye,
To seek new homes beneath an alien sky.

Why have they crossed the wide and pathless sea?
Why hath that old man left th' ancestral tree
Beneath whose branches sleep his wife and sire,
And which no more his dim eyes may admire?
Why hath that tearful maiden snatched her charms,
Perhaps forever, from her lover's arms?
Why hath that kind-faced matron left behind
Her aged parents and their home resigned?

Alas! the shadow of the tyrant's rod
Hath blighted the fair thresholds where they trod,
And robbers, with long titles for their masks,
Stolen the wages of their wretched tasks,
Leaving no good they ever can attain,
But hopeless lives of penury and pain;
While far across the ocean their dim eyes
Have pictured all that life can realize,
The blessed liberty to till the soil
And reap the harvests springing from their toil,
The blessed right to labor and aspire
To every boon ambition may desire,
The wicked insolence of rank unknown,
An equal law, and every man his own.

Alas! the sun hath spots upon its face!
Alas! all evil things and things of grace,
In this strange world of which we nothing know,
So odd unite and so together grow,
That surely what is evil, what is good,
Is never easy to be understood.

Now let us view awhile the crazy tricks
Of the strange whirligig of politics:
The subtle schemes with disappointments fraught;
The bubble honors bursting soon as caught;
The rancors, jealousies, and dark designs;
The fierce assaults; the mines and countermines;
The humbugs practiced with a saint-like leer;
The hollow friendships, and the hates sincere;—

In short, the horde of rascals great and small
Who, wolf-like, fatten upon those who fall,
And who, like foul fish dripping from the brine,
Shine while they stink and rotten while they shine.

There is Contordus, a small politician,
Who thinks his trade is that of a magician ;
Who hopes to cheat the public of its prizes
By trickery and harlequin devices ;
Who deems a feint much better than a blow,
And strives for naught but humbugs here below ;
And finds, too late, that he has Punched and Judyed,
Only to be himself the most deluded.

Then there is Coppus with his front of brass,
A cross between a jackal and an ass,
A pendulum betwixt a rogue and dunce,
A coward and a bully both at once ;
Who takes delight in pulling others down,
But never lifts himself above a clown ;
Whose moral nose is vigilant and thin,
Well formed to root all sorts of ordure in,
And keen to scent the stench of putrefaction,—
Yet wholly good for nothing save detraction.

Next is Apollus, with his curls and rings
And canes and gloves, and all such dainty things ;
Who deems a shining chain across his vest
Of greater need than brains with culture blessed ;
Who for all knowledge finds a substitute
When he can purchase an artistic boot ;
And as he sees therein his foolish face,
Dreams he is stepping into power and place.
Poor idiot ! politics are foul and sloppery,
And soon would smirch his finery and foppery.

Next is old Buffet with his rags and dirt,
Whose shoreless mouth with equal skill can squirt
Tobacco-juice and curses : coarse and loud,
He seems to think that voters must be cowed,
And that the ballot-box is but a pen,

Except 'tis not for cattle, but for men.
His boastful tongue is oft with liquor thick,
While his vile jests would make a monkey sick ;
At every form of decency he rails,
His morals quite as filthy as his nails ;
Yet human nature is so weak and base,
We often see such low brutes win the race.

Lithe as a leopard, subtle, spry and keen,
Felinus next appears upon the scene.
His yellow eye is swift and vigilant,
His spring an arrow from a bow well bent.
Under the shadow of decaying walls
With stealthy steps expectantly he crawls,
Shuns the broad day unsuited to his work,
And in his ambush patiently doth lurk,
Until the prey is found his foot beneath,
And the crunched food incarnadines his teeth.

One noble-browed with intellect comes next,
A chieftain by unnumbered cares perplext :
A man of iron will and splendid force,
Who like a brilliant star pursues his course :
Bold in his plans, a prophet of results,
No dangers tame the vigor of his pulse ;
But when disasters, which will come, assail,
Beneath which feebler spirits bend and quail,
He rises with a strength before unknown,
Until defeat to victory hath grown.
And yet this man, with powers so high and grand,
Is the most dangerous wretch in all the land,
His rude ambition such a monster grown,
In brutal majesty it rules alone.

I cannot stop to scan the whole arena's
Menagerie of serpents, wolves, hyenas,
Tigers, sharks, monkeys, (now and then a lion,)
Which Uncle Sam is called to keep an eye on :
I only marvel as I look around,
His striped pants are still above the ground.

He who would thrive by politics should first
Bury his manhood as a thing accurst ;
Should study prudence and neutrality ;
Should smile by habit, blush not at a lie ;
Extend a cordial hand to rogues and fools ;
Consent to be enrolled with servile tools ;
Like weather-cocks obey each wind that blows ;
Like rotten sticks float as the current flows ;
And then—if not too honest or too wise—
With decent luck debility will rise.

But they who seek high duties to perform,
And act as faithful pilots in the storm,
Must learn to brave all perils which assail,
And scorn the hardships of the fiercest gale.
These noble few, disdaining things of self,
Toil for their country, not for place and pelf ;
And as their guerdon for each lofty aim,
Suffer ingratitude and hate and shame !

See Walpole and Newcastle each maintain
His clutch on power, which Cartaret grasps in vain :
The first an ignorant demagogue at best,
The second a vile dunce with cunning blest,
While Cartaret stands a statesman learn'd and great,
Wise in his plans and matchless in debate.
But the base arts of bribery which kept
Walpole in office, though a nation wept
And clamored for his blood, and the low guile
With which Newcastle courted fortune's smile,
Such souls as Cartaret's gaze on in disdain,
And scorn to kneel while rotten boroughs reign.

From year to year, it seems a curious fact,
How party chiefs preserve their lines intact,
While parasitic thousands help maintain,
With strength of lungs and feebleness of brain.
Doctrines so few among them could explain.

The causes for so strange a spectacle,
Are far too manifold for verse to tell ;
But one potential cause is manifest,
That dominates the universal breast,—
The greed for power and station great and small,
Whose stereoscopic views have charms for all.
This is the passion which cons well each word
Whene'er the voice of leadership is heard,
And though it drip with folly and deceit,—
It matters not,—a million tongues repeat ;
Just as the hungry parrot will rehearse,
To get his meal, a sermon or a curse.

None are so hapless as small politicians,
Plebeian servants to befouled patricians ;
Fowls on a dunghill in a lousy brood,
From filth and ordure picking up their food.

An old man, with his boy, once started down,
His ass before him, to the market-town. (Note b.)
“Have you no sense ?” inquired a passer-by,
“To trudge on foot when that stout ass is nigh ?”
At this the old man, sedulous to please,
Had his boy mount, who rode along at ease
Until the next they met exclaimed in rage,
“That lazy youth has no respect for age !”
At this the old man, smarting from the scoff,
Got on the ass and bade his son get off.
“A wretched shame !” he soon heard some one talk,
“Himself to ride and let his poor boy walk !”
And then the old man scratched his poll awhile,
And soon resolved as 'twas the final mile,
His son and he should both bestride the ass.
So on they went until it came to pass
The poor beast, overworked, laid down and died ;
“What shameless cruelty !” the passers cried.
Thus many a politician, who has tried
To please all, has pleased none, and lost his ass beside !

III.

An ignorant bear, emerging from his wood,
Espied some fowls lift up in gratitude
Their pious bills toward heaven, whene'er they drank ;
At which the brute with laughter shook his flank.
This won the notice of a stately cock,
Who seemed the patriarch of the virtuous flock,
And who proceeded to rebuke him thus :
"Sincere devotion you deride in us !
In our own way we give our thanks to heaven :
By you, perchance, no thanks at all are given !"
The bear abashed back to his thickets fled,
To meditate on what the cock had said.

Among the beasts a vile distemper raged,
Which seemed impossible to be assuaged ;
And so they came together to invent
Some scheme to stop the plague which heaven had
sent,
And soon agreed the one whose crime was worse.
Should die to save the balance from the curse.
The lion owned that he had broke the law,
By killing sheep and eating shepherds raw ;
The wolf, the bear, the fox, the ox, the dog,
They all, in short, confessed what set agog
The ears of all the others in amaze,
To learn how vile had been their neighbors' ways.
At length the donkey learned that it was time
For him to make confession of his crime ;
And owned that he had nibbled once the grass
When through a parson's field he chanced to pass.
"Stop !" cried they all, "'Twas sacrilege, no less :
While all the balance was but wickedness !"
And so they took the foolish beast away,
And spilled his blood heaven's anger to allay.

Each passing breeze Saint Peter's vane commands ;
But through the ages the cathedral stands.
Good priests of pious lives have done and died,
Their lives obscure, unspoiled by pomp and pride :
As prophets, sages, seers, they made no claim :
No mantle of Elijah gave them fame.
They cared alone to do their duty well,
And error from the minds of men dispel ;
But to do this their strong, heroic souls
Sought self-denial as the goal of goals,
Spurned wealth, spurned honors, friendship, home
and ease,
And gave their lives when such were heaven's decrees.

To-day I heard a priest in pious phrase
Portray how humble Christ was all his days.
His clothes were fine and his religion staunch,
His pay was even larger than his paunch :
While some I saw inside the sacred door
The proofs of poverty and sorrow bore.
Across my mind a vision came of those,
The early Christian priests, who soothed the woes
Of poor humanity with all they had,
Their wallets lean, their vestments old and sad.
Too oft our modern priests are clerical
Beau Brummels, vain as women, who give all
Their souls' solicitude to their silk hats
And coats and gloves and breeches and cravats.

And other priests among us, quite as vain
In other ways, the creed of Christ profane.
They seek not to enforce God's holy laws,
They seek not truth, but only seek applause,
Equipping their amorphous sermons in
Sesquipedalian words to dazzle sin.
Better a dancing dog, whose gravity
Of pendant paw and reverential eye,
The pious pantomime and solemn game
Of all such pulpit puppets puts to shame !

The dog who in a mirror stops to stare,
And growls as if some other dog were there,
Is a half-brother at the very least,
To many a rogue who passes for a priest.
Most oft such rogues are pulpit pugilists,
Who rail and threaten with theatric fists,
In such a braggart and robustious way,
The angels must be frightened when they pray.

Why does not God chain up the devil ; or,
Rather, what was he ever loosened for ?
The creeds of Hell and Satan, I confess
Please not my head, and please my heart still less.
They seem a rude and awful monument,
To which heroic souls their toils have lent,
And may have been, perchance, in their good time,
Barriers against the march of sin and crime :
But now they stand a clumsy Chinese Wall,
Which proves how fierce the passions which intrall
The human breast, but likewise proves how dense
The ignorance 'gainst which it gave defence.

The priest should show us evil by the torch
Of gentle love which gleams in Heaven's porch,
Not in the lurid light and sulphurous smell
Of hate and vengeance which ascend from hell.
Men into hypocrites by terror driven
Are fit for knaves, but quite unfit for Heaven.
Roses and myrtles may in safety bloom
Close where the avalanche congeals in gloom ;
But the diviner flowers of piety
Snap from their stems when vengeance rules the sky.

When Luther wedded Catherine 'twas said
An Anti-Christ must spring from such a bed ;
For ne'er before such impious act was done
Since man first sinned, a Monk to wed a Nun.
Erasmus heard ; "If such the rule is," said he,
"The world is full of Anti-Christ's already !"

IV.

Two rats who disagreed about some cheese,
Called on a monkey to decide their pleas.
With true judicial gravity he broke
The chunk of cheese in two before he spoke ;
Then weighed them on his scales, and when 'twas done
Found one piece heavier than the other one.
In equity he lessened by a bite
The larger piece ; but then it was too light,
And so he had to nibble at the other.
At this the suitors looked at one another,
And begged His Honor for their shares at once ;
But he replied with magisterial grunts,
'Twas plain their ignorance had much to learn ;
And went on nibbling at each piece in turn,
'Til there was left at last but one small bit ;
"This is for *costs* !" he said, and swallowed it !

John Doe and Richard Roe were honest men,
Whose lives were passed in honest friendship, when
Between them happened a dispute somehow
About the dubious title to a cow.
The parties to a court of justice hied,
And called upon the lawyers to decide.
Richard pulled stoutly at the horns, and John
Pulled just as stoutly at the tail anon ;
While the spry lawyers, taught in every bilk,
Squeezed her teats dry and carried off the milk :
Thus 'til the cow was dead, when hide and hair
Were taken by the sheriff for his share.

All persons by attorney may appear
In court, save fools, whose bodies must be there ;
Because the wisdom of the law doth say
None are so fit to go to law as they. (Note c.)

Blackstone, the eulogist of England's laws,
Applauds the jury system as the cause
Why Englishmen are happy, proud and free,

Beyond all other tribes where lawyers be.
Now in the name of logic, (if indeed,
Logic has ever dwelt south of the Tweed ?)
I ask how can it be that judges then
Cannot so well adjudge as ignorant men ?
Or is it possible that Blackstone thinks,
(And I suspect he sometimes slyly winks
Over his goosequill,) is it possible,
He thinks twelve ignoramuses excel
Any one judge whom England ever had ?
Or is't a judge with technicals goes mad ?

The painter places near his pyramid
A lonely camel half in shadows hid,
And groups before his marble palaces
A score of beggars in their squalid dress.
Justice oft deals in contrasts quite as broad
As those which artists love and critics laud :
How often should a Jeffries in his gown
And gravity of wig at once step down,
Tear off the symbols of authority,
And take the felon's box which standeth nigh !

A lawyer and a doctor quarreled loud
In ancient days once which should head the crowd
In a procession. Each claimed angrily
His trade stood higher in its dignity.
They left the matter to Diogenes,
Who, after hearing their respective pleas,
The man of law decided to prefer ;
"After the Thief the Executioner !"

The oxen once resolved to gore and slay
The butchers as their foes without delay ;
When an old ox who had not spoke a word,
The grave and potent seignior of the herd,
Spoke thus, "It is a blunder you commit !
Men will have beef to eat, be sure of it.

Why kill the butchers, at their trade expert ?
In order to be mangled and worse hurt
By ignorant fellows destitute of skill,
Who'd hack and torture us as well as kill ?"
To this plain sense did all concurrence give,
And so the butchers were allowed to live.

Physicians oft their ignorance disguise
By the plain trick of looking very wise.
They kill a patient with such show of art,
They shame an actor playing his best part :
They feel one's pulse with so austere an air,
The ancient oracles could not compare ;
They send a nasty bolus on its way,
And never Solomon looked wise as they.

The first physicians known to history
Were the Egyptians, who the mummery
Of priestcraft shrewdly mixed with herbs and flies :
Next the Assyrian doctors took their rise,
Who dealt in magic, and with incantations
Their patients dosed through their imaginations,
(Just as some modern doctors, it is said,
Succeed the best with sugar-coated bread :)
We turn to Greece, and find Hippocrates
The first great ignoramus in disease ;
Then Esculapius, Chiron, Podalirius,
For hosts of ancients rendered matters serious ;
The temples Cos and Gnidos then arose
To swell the catalogue of human woes,
Where fierce Empirics and stout Dogmatists
Over their slaughtered thousands shook their fists :
Acron, Pythagoras, Democritus,
Galen, Praxagoras, Herophilus,
Draco, Vesalius. Rubeck, Valentine,
Malpighi, Paracelsus, Bartholine,
With others far too numerous to detail,
In turn have made unnumbered victims quail.
Dried vipers' flesh was used in Nero's reign,

As Spanish flies still sell, to blister pain;
While for their balsams, ointments, diuretics,
Antiphlogistics, purgatives, emetics,
The viscera of toads and reptiles vile,
All the foul weeds which wood and field defile,
And all the mineral poisons can be found,
In mortars mixed and miserably ground,
Have been quacked off in bottles, salts and pills,
Cathartics, blisters, liniments and squills,
Until 'twould seem through physis this round ball
Must soon become a stinking sepulchre.

Now through these centuries of murder, what
Appears to be the business they are at?
Just this, no more: they take an ill-starred dog
And dose him with some new-compounded drug;
If he survive, (which seldom is the case,)
A panacea for the human race
Has been discovered, and is dosed around
Until it puts its thousands under ground;
And then more dogs their luckless lives must lose
That Science some new drug again may choose.
Thus dogs and men to early graves are sent,
That dull empirics may experiment,
May be four thousand years in finding out
That the blood circulates, (and then feel doubt,)
Looking as wise the while as round-faced owls,
And hiding ignorance in pompous scowls,
And wretched quackery in half-learnt Latin,
While in security they strut and fatten.

A bloated frog, emerging from his marsh,
Mounted a log, and then in gutturals harsh,
Proclaimed himself a wise physician bred,
To cure all ills which beasts inherited.
A fox at once demanded with a grin,
Why then he did not mend his own blotched skin.
At this the frog, more modest than are men,
Jumped off the log, and boasted ne'er again.

V.

It happened that a lion and an ass
Once had a fight, but which the victor was
Never was known, because the ass contrived
To paint the piece through which the tale survived.

The history of the world, must be confessed,
Is but a partial picture at the best.
Most men seem prone to reason on events,
Not from essentials, but from accidents ;
Like the dull boor who at the stranger stares
And judges of him from the coat he wears.
Ignorance censures the unfortunate
For what it lauds the prosperous and great ;
As prisons yawn the feeble to devour,
While guilt stalks fearless in the guise of power.

Earth wears new wrinkles with increasing age,
Unknown to sacred bard and ancient sage.
But while the earth grows older every day,
Men still are moulded from the self-same clay,
Ruled by the passions, appetites and whims
Which Adam felt and every Homer linns.

'Tis probable the greatest ancients knew
Catarrhs and colics as we moderns do ;
Played in the dirt when children, and when men
Oft found themselves all smeared with dirt again.

God was first worshipped in mere things of clay,
And still we worship greatness the same way.
All greatness in the abstract pales at once
Before the gems which deck the splendid dunce.
Could but the idols men have fashioned out
To crook their knees, be niched in rows about
For a few centuries before our gaze,
The attributes of greatness would amaze.

The dwarf who stands upon a giant's head
Sees farther than the giant, it is said.
It does not follow that because this age
Presents a broader and more splendid page,
Therefore its men are greater. The poor fly
Inclosed in amber may amuse the eye,
But it excites the same surprise as that
With which we view the dignitary's hat
Bestowed by fate on some illiterate lout,
While learning drudges with his elbows out :—
And still like Pope and Sydney Smith we stare,
And "wonder how the devil it got there !" (Note d.)

Solomon says that as a dog returneth
Unto his vomit, so a blockhead yearneth
To do his folly o'er and o'er again.
I fear these caustic words describe all men :
For as we look abroad upon the earth,
Its pantomimic scenes of joy and mirth,
We find that somewhere in the paths they tread,
The wise as well as weak estray are led ;
And that when once the wheel of folly whirls
Beneath the feet of Solomons or churls,
Some fatal instinct seems to hold them fast,
The slaves of folly to the very last.

The eldest bard once of mankind wrote thus,
"The gods who made us have to laugh at us !"
And Portia's words too oft just fill the span,
"God made him, therefore let him pass a man !"

Moulded from dust which soon is dust again,
How vain and transient are the lives of men ;
The longest life upon time's shoreless sea,
But a poor bubble of frivolity ;
And all the centuries a single day,
While empires rise like forests and decay !
Humanity seems but a common dyke,
Through which in turn we ooze away alike ;

Alike for all the darkness unexplored
Before and after where the stream is poured !

Behold the blazing log of sturdy oak,
How soon 'twill vanish in its shroud of smoke :
But therefore does the acorn fall in vain,
Warmed by the sun and nourished by the rain ?
Not so. Whate'er its destiny may be,
To buffet the wild billows of the sea,
To shine in splendid paint in kingly halls,
To fall to earth and perish where it falls !

VI.

A comb of honey once induced an ape
To put his nose into an ugly scrape :
Stung and enraged, "How strange it is, that bees,
Who live in sweets, should have such stings as these !"
A bee replied, "The honey which I bring,
Is quite as sweet as bitter is my sting !"

Sam. Johnson hints that marriage, it is plain,
Is much like flies upon a window-pane ;
Those outside to get in buzz much about,
Those inside buzz still harder to get out. (Note e.)

Marriage, like rheumatism, is a curse ;
But then celibacy, like gout, is worse !

I cannot think of Solomon except
As one whose splendid wisdom seldom slept ;
Yet history teaches me that I am wrong,
For Solomon was certainly too long
In learning that one woman is enough—
Often to make one's Jordan very rough.

A man, 'tis somewhere said in saw or song,
At twenty must be tall, at thirty strong,
At forty wise, at fifty rich, or he
Nor tall, strong, wise nor rich will ever be :
But surely of a woman it is true,
For folly any of her years will do.

Th' Ephesian widow, so says sacred ink,
Wept with one eye while t'other tipt the wink.

History tells that in a former age
A Duchess had a monkey for a page;
But modern belles who wealth or titles wed,
Husbands oft lose and capture apes instead. (Note f.)

Wealth which the fair so ardently admire,
To the poor moths oft proves a fatal fire.
'Tis true, it keeps their pretty hands unspoiled,
But oft, instead, their innocence is soiled.
Better the spindle and the linsey gown,
Than all the vicious elegance of town,
If so we keep our firesides' simple joys,
And miss the whirl of fashion's tainted toys!
But this, alas! they learn not, 'til the heart
Is old with pain and scarred by sorrow's dart!

Choose for thy wife her whom thy heart and head
Alike incline with fond desire to wed:
Weigh her upon the scales of thy good sense,
Without th' ephemeral aids of opulence,
Dress, fashion, social caste, accomplishments:
For oft the worldling who these things doth wed,
Takes but a phantom to his home and bed,
Which melts away as years roll on apace,
And leaves a skeleton in his embrace.

Love is the atmosphere of Paradise,
Which once inhaled naught else can souls suffice.
The rosebush has its bud, and woman, love;—
But only one unfolds with storms above.
There are so gentle, loving, pure and meek,
We hear an angel's voice whene'er they speak,
So lovable of face, that when they smile
We catch a glimpse through Heaven's doors the while.

Teach us, O Galen-wigged cotemporaries,
How is it that an old man, when he buries
His wife of fifty years, at once invades
The neighboring country for its youngest maids :
Like a volcano with its crown of snow
That quenches not the flames that burn below.

Like lamp-guards of asbestos made, the Prude
Is incombustible, ('tis understood.)
But then this curious fact is not found out,
Unless there happen to be fire about :
Now is not this the reason, I inquire,
Prudes are so often found so near the fire ?
And then another circumstance appears,
That as her wrinkles multiply with years,
She adds defences to her citadel,
Until at last 'tis quite impregnable.

Such a strange monster as the female prude,
Perchance by thoughtful minds is understood ;
But solve us that phenomenon who can,
The woman who aspires to be a man !
The heavy armor of the Northern bands,
Weighed down their wearers on the Syrian sands ;
The furs and skins which warm the Esquimaux,
Would kill the Nubian in a day or so ;
And on a female Heaven itself must ban
The bifurcated garments of a man !

The first one of her sex, the Scriptures say,
Was fashioned from a rib instead of clay ;
But many of her daughters, I'm afraid,
Out of jaw-bones, instead of ribs, are made.
I could endure the boils which pestered Job,
And smile content beneath the surgeon's probe,
Indeed I think I'd suffer to be hung,
Rather than writhe beneath the furious tongue,
Lingua perpetua, of a scolding wife,

Through all the ages of a hen-pecked life.

Fair dames! the racket of the roost appears
The special duty of the chanticleers.
Remember this, and bridle your fierce tongues :
'Twas not to rail God gave you lips and lungs !
A smile is efficacious unto good ;
But scolding breeds fierce devils in the blood.

VII.

Rouse up, my friend ! 'Tis wickedness and folly
Thus to crouch down in moping melancholy.
I know your recent troubles have been great,
But to nurse folly lessens not its weight.
Strabismic grief has been the fatal stuff
From which have issued lunatics enough,
Without your name upon their catalogue.
Why, man, you seem at anchor in a fog,
As absent-minded as the amorous spark
When winking at his sweetheart in the dark.
Rouse up, my friend ! shake off your cares and pains,
As lions shake the storm-drops from their manes !
Go out and breathe the sparkling atmosphere,
The Gods' champagne which gives celestial cheer ;—
It pours in such profusion from the sky,
Bacchus must surely be asleep on high.
Get the heart stirring once with nimble blood,
And grief soon elsewhere rears her dusky brood :
Grief is a bat that loves the darkness best,
And far from noise and sunlight builds her nest.
A giant when he first emits his groan,
Is smaller than the smallest dwarf when grown ;
And cares which might be strangled at the first,
Are often into potent monsters nursed.
Men never should disdain to look well after
Their efforts to attain the cure of laughter ;
Distraction is the broom to sweep the brain
Clean of the webs and gloom of care and pain.
When Rome with stricken face and famished tread,
Alike her ancient games, as well as bread,

Implored of her scared senate, or she die,
Hers was a Human, not a Pagan cry !

Seek not with wine thy sorrows to dispel ;
For then thy mouth becomes a gate to hell :
Tea, sown in water, sprouted into sabres,
When British George bought gun-flesh from his
 neighbors ;
Cares sown in wine bring forth a crop of crimes,
And Satan buys much hell-flesh at such times.

Griefs oft are harrows for the soul, which fit
Its soil for crops of wisdom, worth and wit :
Hearts stand in need of tempests, clouds and rain,
As well as sunshine, or they bear no grain.
But often those whose lives are so serene,
No storms disturb the sunshine of the scene,
Contrive to find the needful irrigation
By brewing tempests in imagination.

A young man's soul is like a pleasure ground,
Where colors flaunt and merry fiddles sound :
An old man is a house gone to decay,—
His thoughts are bats by night and owls by day.
Conserve the youthful streams of cheerfulness,
And waste them not in riot and excess :
So shall they keep thy soul a verdant lawn,
Whereon the sunset emulates the dawn.

Watch well thy deeds ; but watch with wariness
The manner of their doing none the less.
A kindness may be done in such a way,
We execrate the doer for his pay :
We pull the rose when punctured by its thorn,
No less because its sweets perfume the morn ;
We hate the bee when punished by his sting,

No less for all the honey on his wing.
Prometheus prates so much about his chains,
We look with less of pity on his pains ;
And when Jove nods in such bombastic style,
We tip the wink to Juno half the while.

Guide not thy life too strictly by fixed rules :
They serve philosophers, and govern fools.
Which was the wiser captain, Bonaparte,
Or the Dutch General, who said his heart
Was broken, not because he had not won,
But that against the art of war 'twas done ?
His haste once saved a soldier, bear in mind,
By buckling his good breast-plate on behind :
Yet should a captain, from this incident,
Array his troops in like accoutrement
To lead them into battle, the whole earth
For weeks would titter in derisive mirth.
Even the great Napoleon gravely shows
A silly spectacle amid his woes,
When St. Helena hears him prove it true,
By all the laws of war and fortune too,
Wellington should have lost at Waterloo.

We often see the man of intellect,
Upon the shore of life uselessly wrecked,
Because those energies whose power propels,
Are far too weak or only work by spells :
Just as the finest coach but useless stands,
Unless the engine tread the iron bands.
Now pause and gaze on Stupidus awhile,
On whose dull head Dame Fortune loves to smile :
That dunce of all the school, blest with conceit,
Oft triumphs where his comrades find defeat :
The cork of vanity buoys up his chin
So well he cannot sink, and so must win ;
While stronger swimmers all around him tire,
And leave the stream, or wallow in its mire.

"A little more of grape, good Captain Bragg!"
Brought triumph when the guns began to lag.

A city closed its gates, and many sought
To gain admission, but their prayers were nought.
And lo! an ass which bears a freight of gold,
Walks up in turn, and quick the gates unfold:
Because the ass who bears a golden freight,
Carries the key all locks to penetrate.

The longer that we suffer from our kind,
The more the drear conviction chills the mind,
That gold is safety, freedom, friendship, truth,
The staff of age however scorned by youth.

Poverty, wretchedest of human hags,
Oft struts in silks as well as skulks in rags.

Our wants, not our possessions, we should scan;
He who wants little is the happy man!

The grindstone that whets sharp the appetite,
Oft is the same on which the wits grow bright.

How to get rich? 'Tis not so hard a thing!
First from the heart all nobler feelings fling
As useless weeds, and let its currents freeze;
Medicine love as profitless disease;
Trample on honor, friendship, happiness;
Shut close both eyes and ears to all distress;
By every stratagem get every cent,
Let usury run, and let no part be spent;
Then when long years record their gloomy date,
Wealth surely comes—with sickness, death and hate!

The men who hoard their dollars from the poor,
They hold no tickets taken at Heaven's door.
And if St. Peter such a thing should do
As fall asleep and let the rascals through,
'Tis certain that but brief would be their stay;
For when they'd fall upon their knees to pray,

They'd see the gold and dig the floor so well
That soon they'd tumble through it into Hell!

Neither a miser nor a spendthrift be ;
But learn the art of just economy.
Haste not for wealth, for then contentment flees ;
Slow and sure gains precede an age of ease.

Dame Fortune, when she gives men lofty places,
Is oft a tiger making pretty faces.

Serpents may wriggle to the highest peak ;
But when they ape the eagle, the proud shriek
Which rises soon above them in disdain,
Proves that their wriggings have been all in vain.

The old sun-dial often puts to shame
The clock that clicks through night and day the same ;
But therefore is the clock an useless thing,
To keep the record of time's flying wing ?

The steadfast oak roots deeper in the soil,
When tempests toss his limbs in wild turmoil ;
The Swedish Charles learned best the art of war
In battles where his foe was conqueror :
Sinews of iron strength support the forms
Which often buffet the rude mountain storms ;
And souls which with stern fate in combats rude
Oft struggle, are with sturdier strength endued.

See that thy means are weighted to thine ends,
Or else thine ass beneath his burden bends.
Make thou thy bedstead fit thy limbs, and not
Procrustes-like, thy limbs to fit thy cot.
"Into old bottles pour not thy new wine ;"
"Nor in thy flower-vase plant the mountain-pine ;"
Or else thy liquor on the ground may smoke,
And the tree perish, or the vase be broke.

A man's own hands alone can dig the dirt
By which his fame essentially is hurt.
He who is heedless who his comrades are,
Of his own character takes little care ;
For evil manners are contagious weeds,
Which seize all neighboring soil with roots and seeds.
Wear self-denial as thy talisman ;
And shun temptation as the curse of man.
To thine own self religiously be true,
And God, mankind, thyself, get every due.

The little vices which are nursed by men,
Are like the eggs hatched by the foolish hen :
For they are serpents' eggs, which, soon or late,
Will wreak upon us their envenomed hate.

A fox espied a boar who carefully
Was whetting his long tusks against a tree.
"Why are you toiling so with all your might,"
Inquired the fox, "with not a foe in sight?"
"That may be true ; but when I see the foe,
Of other things I'll have to think, you know."

A fisherman once caught a little fish,
Which pleaded hard for life ; "Sir, grant my wish :
I am so little throw me in the brook,
And when I'm larger bait again your hook."
But he was wise ; "One fish, however small,
Is surely better than no fish at all :
I've got you now, but if I let you go,
Never again, perhaps, my hook you'll know."

Select thy mark in life, and shoot at it
Until the target's centre thou canst hit :
Let not thy shafts at careless random fly,
Or else an empty quiver by-and-by.

Who tries to saddle two pursuits at once,
Oft tumbles to the ground a sorry dunce ;
And fares like him of whom the tale is told,
Who had two wives at once, one young, one old.
The young wife, of a gay and lively turn,
Did not desire that people should discern
She had an old man for a husband, so
She pulled his gray hairs out each day or two ;
The old wife, on the other hand, did not
Wish to look older than her husband got,
And so she pulled his black hairs out with care.
So it went on, until between the pair,
The poor man's head at last was snatched completely
bare !

VIII.

Most minds appear constructed like the toys
Called *jumping-jacks*, which so amuse the boys ;
Each has a string—ambition, envy, hate,—
Pull smartly and the antics will be great.

I'd sooner trust a good man who hath erred,
Than a vile hypocrite by fear deterred ;
The good man soweth thick with righteous seeds
The burial places of his past misdeeds ;
But the vile hypocrite writes on the grave
Of every vice his record as a knave.

Of many liars underneath the sun
The odious catalogue is never done.
One for a shilling would not lie,—that's well,—
But for a hundred he'd a hundred tell ;
Another tells a lie like Erin's son
Shoots round a corner with a crooked gun ;
And still another falsifies so sleek
We're charmed as if we'd heard an angel speak ;
But of all liars most accursed and vile
Is he who deals a stab beneath a smile ;

His treacherous tongue should gangrene in his head,
And vermin gnaw his Judas lips when dead !

Just as the ostrich hides its foolish head,
But leaves its body to the hunter's lead,
E'en thus deceit conceals one filthy place,
But somewhere else uncovers its disgrace.
Let not the lying hypocrite suppose
His baseness he can hide with honest shows ;
The man who through a meadow haps to pass
And sees a dog's tail wag above the grass,
Although he gaze upon the spot with care
And see no dog, he knows a dog is there !

A stag, once drinking at a crystal tide,
Reflected there his branching horns descried ;
"How fine they are !" the vain young thing exclaimed,
"But of my spindling legs I'm much ashamed !"
Just then was heard the cruel noise of hounds,
And swift the poor stag ran with frightened bounds
Into a wood, discerning soon he must
In his derided legs put all his trust ;
But soon his horns, between two trees caught fast,
To the fierce hounds his life betrayed at last.—
Men oftentimes regard the truth with shame—
Support their pride with lies—and fare the same.

Beware of greed ; for, nine times out of ten,
To get the golden egg it kills the hen.
Beware the silly conduct of the dog,
Who crossed a stream one day upon a log,
A piece of meat between his lucky jaws ;
But soon stopped short upon his way because,
(Deceived by his own image underneath,)
He thought he saw more meat,—unclosed his teeth
To snatch it, and soon after left the log,
His dinner lost, a sad but wiser dog.

The man whose ears from his own lips ne'er heard
For others in distress one kindly word,
Should marvel not if they but seldom hear
From other lips the words of help and cheer.
One day the wind blew off an old man's wig,
At which the passers raised a merry rig;
"Fools!" he cried out, "Is it a wonder then,
A head can't keep the hair of other men,
Which has not kept its own a score of years and ten?"

Know you of one who scolds his erring brothers,
And does himself what he condemns in others?
You think you know not such a man? Why, then,
Look in your glass and he will meet your ken.
Critics too much resemble the old crab,
Who scolded at her daughter like a drab;
"Why do you sidle on in that rude way?
Why don't you move like other people, pray?"
"Well," said the daughter, "you go first, and show
How it is done, for I should like to know!"

Once lived a fox, who, having lost his tail
When pilfering near a trap, sought to prevail
On all the neighboring foxes whom he knew,
To do like him and cut their tails off too.

A sneaking, filthy, despicable cur,
God's meanest creature is a slanderer!
To paint his portrait is impossible;
'Twould be to paint the lineaments of hell!
But by one trait through all the world he's known,
Others he brands with faults which are his own.

An ass who carried salt from town to town,
Crossing a river stumbled and fell down;
The water soon dissolved the salt away,
Whereon the ass trudged off content and gay.

Next day, a load of sponges on his back,
He happened to pursue the self-same track ;
So he contrived again to stumble in
At the same spot, but found to his chagrin,
His heavy load dissolved away no more,
And soon became thrice heavier than before.

A fox once rummaged in a theatre,
And found a mask, at which he looked with care ;
“A handsome face ! and what a shame it is,
There are no brains beneath so fine a phiz !”

When Hercules was changed into a god,
He hastened to exchange a courteous nod
With all the other gods, excepting one,
Plutus, the god of wealth. When he had done,
Jove asked him his strange conduct to explain :
Said Hercules, “My reasons are not vain ;
I’ve seen this god, whose hand I scorn to touch,
On earth associate with rogues too much !

OTHER VERSES.

THE FOREST.

A PRELUDE.

My heart aches, and I tire
Of all the sordid strife,
Day after day, in which I waste my life,
Toiling for nothing higher
Than the vile gold,—in need of which the poor
Must give to carking cares,
Youth, manhood, and gray hairs,
To keep the wraith of famine from the door!

I'll seek awhile the sylvan solitudes,
Where, far apart from all the noise of men,
Amid romantic woods,
Streams murmur in sweet sunlight and soft gloom,
Down the green hill, and through the rocky glen;
And where the fair flowers bloom;
And happy birds sing to the listening leaves
A song that never tires and never grieves.

And there, as in the days
Of happy boyhood, I will sit and gaze
Around in idle freedom, with my head
Against the trunk of some gnarl'd oak wide-spread;
And, as I watch the clouds
Drifting in stately crowds,
Like stately ships with banners streaming high,

Across the azure ocean of the sky ;
And, as I hear the mirth,
And myriad-languaged words,
Float from the throngs of myriad-plumaged birds,
That speak in songs born both of heaven and earth ;
Bright castles shall my blissful fancy build
In those blue fields by mortal plows untilled ;
And on the billowy music of the birds
Shall sweet thoughts drift unspoke in mortal words !

NIGHT.

I.

The new moon cuts with her golden blade
The gloomy clouds that come from the west,
And they scatter across the sky dismayed,
With streaming gashes on every breast ;
And the moon moves on with her golden blade,
To meet the clouds that come from the west ;
And the clouds are numbered, and soon are gone,
And the moon in triumph moves brightly on !

II.

The night has fallen upon my soul,
And the dark clouds come in dread array,
And over the darkling night of dole
There shines a planet unseen at day ;
And the night that darkens across my soul,
And the clouds that come in their dread array,
By the shining planet are pierced with light,
As I wait 'til the morn succeeds the night !

LINES TO A FELLOW PRISONER.

Inflate with joy thy billowy throat,
Thou bright canary,
And give to earth thy sweetest note,
Sky-born and merry !

Heed not the gilded prison-cage
In which thou swingest,
For *thou* thy sorrow canst assuage
Whene'er thou singest!

For thee the stilly solitudes,
The leafy valleys,
The breezy hills and dreamy woods,
Where music dallies,
In sweet content are all forgot,
As blithe thou swingest,
And prison bars can harm thee not,
Whene'er thou singest!

ONCE IN LIFE.

I.

I met her one summer night,
When the full moon rode the sky,
And the lamps of her home shone bright
On the revellers dancing nigh.
I met her when music's charms
Filled all the perfumed air,
'Mid the twinkling feet and the glimmering arms
Which moved o'er the greensward there.

I throned her the fairy queen
Of my heart that very night,
Where the trees were rustling green
And the moon poured down her light.
Our voices were soft and low,
Our eyes with love-light shone,
And her graceful arms of snow
Were circled within my own.

O that sweet and golden hour
When our lips in love first met,
And our hearts first owned the power
That hearts can never forget!

O, the thrill exquisite, divine,
Perfuming our blood with bliss,
As her shy, sweet eyes met mine,
And my lips met hers in a kiss!

II.

Like the wild rose blooming
Afar in its woodland retreat,
While the dew still shines
On its petals red and sweet,
Are the lips of my lady-love,
Mabel, my queen!

Like the notes of the song-bird
When sunrise first kisses the hill,
Like songs from a harp,
Like the murmurs of a rill,
Is the voice of my lady-love,
Mabel, my queen!

And her eyes, they are tender
And bright as the stars in the sky,
And her face is fair
As the faces dreams supply;—
O most fair is my lady-love,
Mabel, my queen!

III.

Though fast the rain is flowing, love,
And cold the winds are blowing, love,
I now must say, Good-night!
For late the hour is growing, love,
And swift the night is going, love,
So, dearest girl, good-night!
Good-night, good-night,—I now must go, love,
Good-night, good-night,—but not, not so, love,
I've one more word to whisper low, love,
Close in thy ear before I go, love,
And say my last good-night!

O why should time keep flying, love,
When fond lips thus are trying, love,
 So hard to say good-night!
Though close our cheeks are lying, love,
He reckes not for our sighing, love,
 But bids us say, good-night!
Good-night, good-night,—but not, not yet, love,
The night, you know, is dark and wet, love,
And not a word must I forget, love,
And so,—I'll stay a moment yet, love,
 Before I say good-night!

I HEARD A SONG.

I heard a song
 Borne from a maiden's throat,—
As soft, melodious billows waft a boat
 Tropical seas along!

I saw a light
 Shine in a maiden's face,
As if her starry soul had quit its place,
 To flash upon my sight!

I dreamed the bliss
 Of a fair maiden's arms
Clung round my neck, while all her blushing charms
 Enclosed me in a kiss!

'Twas joy divine
 To hear, to see, to dream!
O that those singing lips, those eyes' fond beam,
 Those snow-white arms were mine!

O MY!

O my! what strange sensation is
 This one that thrills my heart?
O my! an inflammation 'tis,
 That comes from Cupid's dart!

O my ! before sweet Nancy Lee
 Flashed on me in the dance,
I boasted I was fancy free,
 And laughed at Cupid's lance !

O my ! there could not many see,
 And love not at a glance,
That gem-like girl from Tennessee,
 That sparkled in the dance !

O my ! how much I think of her,
 And all her dazzling charms !
O my ! for one sweet link of her
 Milk-white, embracing arms !

DEATH.

The Hour has come ! The fearful hour when mortals
 Must enter the dim portals,
Beyond which all is shadow'd and unknown !
That dreaded hour, which shuts the eyes forever
 In dreamless slumbers, never
The mystic power of sight again to own !

The face where shone the miracles of thought,
 Shall crumble into naught !
The heart shall cease recording with its beatings
The movements of each never-absent guest
 Of sorrow and unrest,
Of hope and joy, familiar to its greetings !

The tide of life shall still sweep on above him ;
 And hearts shall cease to love him,
Which loved him once !—forgotten and unknown !
His flower-deck'd grave by tender hands protected,
 Shall soon lie all neglected !
His very name shall crumble from the stone !

O, for one glance behind those frowning portals,
 Death opens to us mortals !
O, for one glance into that realm unknown !

Do there, in truth, our souls in conscious being,
Have powers of thought and seeing?
Or, do we perish like the tree and stone!

MANHOOD.

(Suggested by the noble verses of Sir William Jones,
beginning, "What Constitutes a State?")

What constitutes a Man?
Not all the titles which proud kings have worn,
Since tyranny began!
Not laurels from red fields of battle torn,
To deck a conqueror,
Whose pride a million homes makes desolate!
Not, (what fools most adore,)
The pomp and splendor which surround the great!
Not all the sparkling hoards
Of India, nor the siren gold, for which
Nations unsheathe their swords,
And misers starve, in order to be rich!

Not these can make a *Man*!
But courage, wed to gentleness and love:
Eyes which are used to scan
The wants of earth as well as heaven above:
A boundless charity,
Clear-eyed and brave, for all the weaknesses
Of our humanity:
Hands which are ever stretched to help and bless
The poor unfortunates
Who fall or falter in the march of life:
No kneeling at the gates
Of wealth and power: but through the cares and strife,
Which all of us must meet,
A patient courage and high fortitude,
Which never shrink to greet
Fortune's stretch'd hand, however rough and rude:—
These constitute a Man!

LEGENDS OF FANATICISM.

I.

In the name of religion, fanatics have done
Deeds worthy of merciless devils alone ;
With the smoke of the stake oft perfuming a prayer,
And chorusing hymns with the groans of despair!
Alas, for their victims!

I will rescue a legend my ancestors told
Of those long years of horrors, when Philip unrolled
The blood-reeking banners of bigoted Spain,
And the Netherlands battled,—at last not in vain,—
'Gainst the stake and the scaffold.

Philip's soldiery captured three brothers *Van Brent*,
In a desperate fight near the walls of old *Ghent*,
And conveyed them at once to the king, to await
What that merciless monster might fix as their fate,
On the terrible morrow.

When the sun next arose their dread doom was soon
known :
For one on the wheel was first broke, bone by bone ;
And another was stript until naked, and flung
On a bed of hot coals, and a *Te Deum* sung
While he died in his torment.

Then the eldest and last to a dungeon was borne,
Where his nails were pulled out, and his head closely
shorn,
And his body stretched flat on the floor with a chain,
Where for three days and nights he did writhe in his
pain,
Without food, without water.

And the dungeon had vermin which ceaselessly fed
On some oil had been poured on his close-shaven head :
And the rats in great droves would tramp round
where he lay,
And nibble his flesh 'til he scared them away
With his loud shrieks of horror.

Thus in darkness and solitude, stark in his chains,
Without sleep, without water, and racked with his
pains,

This one who was left of the brothers *Van Brent*,
Suffered hell upon earth 'til his last breath was spent,
In that dungeon of horrors!

And 'tis thus in all ages fanatics have done
Deeds worthy of merciless devils alone :
With the smoke of a stake oft perfuming a prayer,
And chorusing hymns with the groans of despair !
Alas! for their victims!

II.

One noon of night in a deep wood,
Beneath a huge oak tree I stood.
The darkness was most dense, save when
The quartered moon shewed, now and then,
Her strange and solitary eye
Among the dark clouds in the sky.
And all was strangely still, save when
Some wakeful breeze, at intervals,
Would rustle through that lonesome glen,
Stealthy as felon footstep falls.

Sudden I shook with nameless fear,
For close beside that old oak tree,
I heard a voice which spoke to me
In whispers which were strange to hear.
A slow bat flitted overhead :—
I closed my eyes in awful dread :—
I felt the presence of the dead !

Again the voice spoke close beside :
I looked, and saw a moonbeam glide
Through the thick foliage of the wood
To shew what shared my solitude.
The mist far off, whose small gray cloud
Hangs just above the twilight wave,
And fades and flutters like a shroud,
Was like that Presence from the Grave.

"Mortal," it whispered, "feel no fear,
But to my tale lend me thine ear.
I am the ghost of one whose name
Long since was lost to human fame :
And yet on earth I played a part
For which few mortals have the heart.
I was a zealot for the growth
Of Holy Church, and took the oath
As member of a Brotherhood,
Whose creed dealt most in fire and blood.

"What faith hath gained and held its sway
Over the fickle minds of men,
Save by the sword? Blood marks the way
Where pious tongue and peaceful pen
Have followed with the words of love,
To guide the souls of men above.
They are but fools who outcry make
For those who roasted at the stake,
And died in dungeons foul, and felt
The tortures which God's priesthood dealt
In pious wrath to heretics,
Beneath the blessed crucifix.

"I lived in that accursed time,
Of infidelity and crime,
When from the overwhelming wave
Of heresy we had to save
Our Holy Church, or see its light
Forever lost in hopeless night.
'Twas then our pious Brotherhood
Proved to its lofty mission true,
And helped immortalize in blood,
The day of St. Bartholomew.

"Ah! well my memory retains
The tragic scenes of that red day,
Devoted to help wipe the stains
Of heresy from earth away :
The corpses stiffening at our feet
In blood that flowed in every street ;

The friends who butchered friends in joy,
Because they worked in Heaven's employ ;
The priests inflamed with holy zeal,
Who bore alike the cross and steel ;
The frantic eyes, the pallid cheeks,
The dying groans, the piercing shrieks ;
Until the godly work was done,
And, lying stiff beneath the sun,
Thousands of butchered heretics
Avenged th' insulted crucifix.

"I well recall one incident,
To which my own sharp sword was lent.
We had pursued a flying score
Of heretics, when at the door
Of a lone house, I met the steel
Of an old man, whose flaming eye
Opposed to my infuriate zeal,
Of a fierce fight gave prophecy.
But his long locks were gray with age,
And his old arms could ill withstand
The youthful strength and pious rage
With which I fought at Heaven's command :
And so the moments were but few
Before I ran his body through,
And stretched him dying in his gore,
His shrieking wife and child before.

"They fled within : I followed fleet,
To make the victory complete.
But as I raised my dripping blade
To pierce the vitals of the maid,
With sudden shock my arm was stayed.
For there before my eyes was one
Whom I had loved in days ago,—
One who had nursed me back to health,
Amid the luxuries of wealth,
Beneath her father's roof, when I,
Pierced with deep wounds, was like to die :—
The only being whom my heart
Had shrined from all the world apart,

No wonder for a space I stood
Disarmed by love and gratitude :
But soon the guilty trance was o'er,
For then a voice oft heard before,
Spoke in my ear, 'Slay with thy hands
All heretics ; 'tis Heaven commands !'
I heeded not her loving cry,
Or pleading look in her blue eye,
But quickly stabbed her through and through ;
And then her aged mother slew ;
That day of St. Bartholomew.

"It happened that I lost my life
Amid that day's eventful strife ;
And roam a miserable ghost,
Barred out from heaven's celestial host.
It must be for that moment's guilt,
When my hand froze to my sword-hilt,
By love and gratitude betrayed
Before the eyes of that fair maid.
For, 'til that time I know and feel
I never paused with torch and steel,
Our Holy Church to serve with zeal.

"I thank thee, mortal, thou hast stayed
To hear the tale which I have told."

The words had ceased : I felt a cold
Wind blow the leaves in that deep shade,
An instant, and I saw the moon
A cloud hide in a pallid swoon.

ON AN ISLAND.

From the bare, moon-lanterned branches of a gaunt and
spectral tree,
Floats forth on the air of midnight an old owl's hoarse
ribaldry ;
While beneath him, in the rushes, croaks a cowl-faced
frog in glee.

From the gaunt, moon-lanterned branches hangs a
human skeleton!

In a sack of chains, which rattles as the night wind
hurries on!

And the flesh and half the garments from the ghastly
bones are gone!

Potent in the roar of ocean,—in whose fathomless abyss,
Lie the Pirate's hapless victims,—who are now avenged
in this!—

And the owl hoots, and the frog croaks, and the wrig-
ling serpents hiss!

HEALTH.

Bright-eyed Health is a peerless lassie,

With the sunrise on her golden hair,

Her laughing lips rose-red and saucy,

Her cheeks abloom with the pure, sweet air.

No midnight revels have dimmed the splendor

Of eyes which sparkle chaste and tender;

No guilt hath broken the pure completeness

Of song and laughter of bird-like sweetness;

And the smiles which brighten her happy lips,

Are like the dew which the sunrise sips.

Give me Health, the peerless maiden,

With her blood more pure than royal blood,

And take the gems and gold which laden

The proudest princes since the flood!

I would not barter one kiss of rapture,

For all that the power of kings can capture;

One sweet caress of her rosy fingers,

Whose thrill in the blood like a perfume lingers,

One single glance of her loving eye,

For all that riches and rank can buy!

O, O!

He and she sate close together,
O, O! how sweet it was!
One cold night of wintry weather,
O, O! how sweet it was!
Up the chimney roared the fire,
And he drew his chair still nigher,
With a glance of fond desire;
O, O! how sweet it was!

She was winsome in her beauty,
O, O! how sweet it was!
And she blushed in modest duty,
O, O! how sweet it was!
With a timid sort of haste
And a beating heart, he placed
One fond arm about her waist:
O, O! how sweet it was!

But just then they heard her father,
O, O! how sad it was!
Coming in like any bother,
O, O! how sad it was!
So their chairs were far apart,
And he felt with troubled heart,
That for home he soon must start,
O, O! how sad it was!

A WIDOW FAIR TO SEE.

She is a widow fair to see,
Possessed of culture, grace and riches,
But strange to say, it seems to me,
Her name is Major Breeches.

Industrious, neat and spry is she,
And never drops her household stitches;
And yet her neighbors all agree
Her name is Major Breeches.

To hear her called thus sounds to me
 So very odd, my mouth it twitches;
 And long I've sought how it can be
 Her name is Major Breeches.

I think I'd like to wed her, she
 My heart so very much bewitches;
 But prudence questions why, you see,
 Her name is Major Breeches.

LINES TO A DIABOLISM.

(Supposed to have been written by an unfortunate individual just after,

*His wealth all he saw go
 In some "deals" at Chicago;
 And who had then resolved to try
 His skill and luck at "poker,"
 And had "four aces" beaten by
 "Four deuces" and the "joker.")*

Thou'st driven me bankrupt from thy door,
 (Which once I stept in triumph o'er,)
 With many a blow and bruise and sore,
 To show thy malice;
 Until of proofs I've got a score
 That Luck no decent gal is!

Thou'rt neither widow, wife, nor maid,
 But a distempered, graceless jade,
 Who ply'st a diabolic trade
 With us poor mortals:
 And curst is he whose steps invade
 Thy slippery, damned portals.

With cards and dice and such base trash,
 How oft we poor fools cut a dash,
 While women wink and gewgaws flash,
 'Til, like a robber,
 Thou steppest in to steal our cash,
 Turning our smiles to slobber.

Even for trile legitimate
 Thou show'st a bastard's sneaking hate,
 Cracking full many an honest pate
 With thy old bludgeon,
 And helping knaves to ride in state,
 While worth afoot must trudge on.

Thou ugly, withered, brimstone hag!
 I wish I had the power to drag
 Thee where Old Nick holds out his bag
 With scrape and grimace:
 How deft I'd hurl thee from the crag,
 With sundry kicks *imprimis*!

THE PARROT AND THE MONKEY.

(AN OLD STORY TOLD AGAIN.)

She was a lady of culture and state,
 But without any husband, I grieve to relate,
 And, what is still worse,
 (For a dame with a purse,)
 She always asserted in language irate,
 That for men she had such an implacable hate,
 She would never consent to take one for her mate,
 To make her his slave and disburse her estate.
 And so she had never delayed by the gate
 To indulge in the dangers of amorous prate;
 Had never permitted her satchel and slate
 To be carried by schoolfellows, little or great;
 Had never to *billet-doux* trusted her fate;
 Had never, in short,
 In earnest or sport,
 Indulged in those weaknesses which are the bait
 With which Cupid and Hymen their victims await.

But my story concerns not the lady so much
 As her parrot and monkey, on whom she bestowed
 All the love, (or, at least, what I'll designate such,)
 With which ladies their husbands so oft incommode.

No one ever heard
Such a wonderful bird,
As her wonderful parrot, the prince of his race ;
And her monkey was spry,
With a comical eye,
And a comical grin on his comical face.

Now the lady, one day
From her home went away,
Without taking her monkey and parrot along :
And the parrot at once,
Began, like a dunce,
To boast of his greatness in language and song,
And reproach the poor monkey who stood at his side,
As a pitiful brute that was wholly tongue-tied.
The monkey endured these reproaches awhile,
And his comical face wore its comical smile ;
But at last all his patience to anger gave place,
And he pounced on the braggart with scowls on his
face.

The battle was sharp, but the battle was brief,
And the voluble parrot soon came to great grief.
Though he swore like a trooper it helped not his cause,
And the louder he swore the less keen were his claws,
And his tongue was no match for the monkey's fierce
paws.

When the lady returned at the close of the day,
The monkey she found in his usual place
With the usual grin on his comical face,
But the parrot, alas ! had vanished away.
She hunted and searched,
But nowhere was he perched,
And for once the poor parrot had nothing to say.
At last she espied him
Where mute he did hide him,
Behind a tall bureau that stood in the room :
And when he was seen,
He came forth from his screen,
Still with nothing to say, and an aspect of gloom.

And he was a pitiful parrot to see,
 With his feathers stripped off from his head to his knee,
 And his poor, ugly carcass disfigured with scratches,
 And one eye and ear covered over with patches.

The good lady cried
 At what she espied,
 At which the poor bird hobbled up to her side,
 Just a trifle recovered in courage and pride ;
 And managed to say,
 In a poor, squeaking way,
 As into her lap he attempted to climb,
 "You see, we've been having a hell of a time!"

Like the parrot I fear I've spent half of my life,
 To be stripped of my feathers and scratched in the
 strife,
 But at least, just like him, I can say in my rhyme,
 "You see, I've been having a hell of a time!"

THE BALLAD OF A BELL:

OR,

*A Village Name that came to final badness,
 By reason of a strange Caninal Madness.*

PART I.

The three were on a lonely street,
 And standing flank by flank ;
 And the largest had a sombre eye,
 And was long and lean and lank.

All suddenly he raised his head
 So aged and so thin,
 As from a belfry not far off
 A bell sent forth its din.

It was the belfry of a church,
 A belfry old and gray,
 In which no bell for years before
 Had rung until that day.

But now upon the startled air
Its sudden voice pealed forth,
And hailed from high the east and west,
And hailed the south and north.

A moment with amazement dumb,
The three stood flank by flank:
Then he who had the sombre eye,
And was long and lean and lank,

Did walk apart with solemn steps,
And listen all intent,
While tow'rds the belfry old and gray
His aged face was bent.

He was well acquaint with one old owl,
A wise and solemn elf,
Who in among the belfry's beams
For years dwelt by himself,—

Had dwelt all by himself, and gazed
On the village spread below,
And blinked his eyes disdainfully
At human joy and woe:

And as he turned his peaked face
Tow'rds the belfry gray with age,
He marvelled if his friend, the owl,
Was still the same calm sage.

He soon had reached the village green
The ancient kirk anear,
Where sauntered groups of villagers
The novel sounds to hear.

And here he learned that workmen had,
At the close of yestern day,
In the belfry put the bright new bell
That was rung so blithe and gay.

PART II.

He was a grave and serious dog,
Averse to folly and sin,
As might be seen by his sombre eye,
His virtuous gait as he went by,
And his jaws so lank and thin.

But now upon the village green,
Albeit by all the village seen,
He did like he was mad;
As if that day had scared away
The sense he whilom had.

That staid and virtuous dog became
A sight both strange and sad,—
Squat on the grass and gazing up,
And howling as if mad.

Tow'rds the belfry steadfastly he gazed
With a scared and anxious eye,
While dismal and lugubrious howls
He sent forth to the sky.

That solitary dog howled on,
In attitude of woe,
Until from out the belfry gray
The sounds had ceased to flow.

Ah! who shall tell what grievous thoughts
His bosom were within,
As there he sate with sombre eye,
So long and lank and thin!

With spoken words and with the pen
Men can their feelings wreak,
But dogs must howl and bark and growl,
Their sentiments to speak.

And yet the wagging of a tail,
Oft, if I do not err,
To very much that's said and writ
We surely must prefer.

PART III.

Some were inclined at first to laugh
At that eccentric dog ;
But the more thoughtful shook their heads,
Prophetic and agog.

He seemed forever on the watch
To hear the bell's first note,
Which from the belfry old and gray
Upon the air could float :

Then would he hasten to the green,
As hastening to a feast,
And sit and upward gaze and howl,
Until the bell had ceased.

He howled alone : and other dogs
That happened near the spot,
Their usual avocations led,
And seemed to notice not.

But soon his phrensy seemed to spread,
And when he sent his wails,
A score of dogs would howl, and sit
Beside him on their tails.

Faster and faster the phrensy spread,
And soon the country round
Had furnished all its dogs, to help
The melancholy sound.

Never before in village small
So many dogs were seen ;
And they gathered like an army, when
They howled upon the green.

While the old belfry held its tongue
They loitered here and there,
As dogs are wont to loiter when
They've leisure hours to spare ;
But when the belfry sent its voice

On morn or evening air,
They flocked as fast as legs could go,
And howled as in despair.

The dog who had the sombre eye,
And who was lank and thin,
Was ever found with face of woe,
To lead them in the din.

What anxious cares his brain perplexed,
What silent griefs he nursed,
What lofty aspirations, or
What schemes the most accursed,
Are buried with him in his grave,
And ne'er shall be rehearsed.

It was a strange and curious sight
To see those dogs collect,
And squat in tragic attitude,
Their faces all erect,
And howl like damned ghosts from hell,
Whene'er they heard that dreaded bell.

The other belfries had their bells,
But strange as strange may be,
They seemed to heed not when they rang
In sorrow or in glee.

Sometimes a straggling villager,
When midnight found him late,
Would see them grouped all on the green.
As if in grave debate
Upon some most momentous point
Connected with their state.

Thus days passed on, and weeks passed on,
And still their host increased ;
And louder grew the dismal howls
Of each demented beast,
Whene'er that bell began to ring,
Until its sound had ceased.

PART IV.

At last the villagers ordained
The dog with a sombre eye,
As one convict of a heinous crime,
A speedy death should die.

For thus they hoped of the strange plague
Their village might be rid ;
And argued that the others howled
Because that lean one did.

And so they led him to his death,
That dog with a sombre eye,
And he, like a martyr at the stake,
Met death heroically.

But human justice is infirm,
And human knowledge small ;
And soon they found to stop the plague
They needs must butcher all.

Some urged that such a plan was best,
But they were weak in sense,
Because the love of men for dogs
Is ever found intense ;—
Intense in men, in women fierce,
Omnipotent in boys ;
And so the bloody scheme was dropped
Amid rebellious noise.

But still the dogs their number swelled,
And still their clamor grew ;
And so the village met again
Some stringent deed to do.

They sent the workmen up once more
Into the belfry gray,
And soon its noisy denizen
Was mutely borne away.

Then was the village freed, at last,
Of the accursed noise,
Which, during weary days and weeks,
Had murdered all its joys.

And soon the stranger dogs were gone
To all the country round,
And plagued the village air no more
With melancholy sound.

It is a village fair to see,
And yet it has its shame,
Because in all the country round
Dogtown remains its name.

I know that names are idle things,
If a mighty bard spake true ;
And yet a name, just like a coat,
May first attract the view ;
And such a name as that I've writ,
A village puts askew.



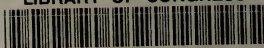
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